

1. Flush your pipes.

For most of us, flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive way for you to help protect your family's health. Flushing the pipes in your home usually use less than one or two gallons of water and cost only a few cents per month. To flush, let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your plumbing, the greater the chance that trace amounts of lead may have leached into the water.

Run the cold water faucet until the water shows a significant temperature change, and then for approximately an additional minute before drinking. To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles with water after flushing the tap and, when possible, use the first flush water to wash dishes or water plants.

2. Use only cold water for cooking and drinking.

Avoid drinking water or cooking with water taken from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water for consumption, use cold water tap water heated on the stove.

3. Remove debris from faucet strainers/aerators regularly.

Remove loose lead solder and debris that may accumulate in your faucet strainers/aerators due to the recent lead service line replacement. You can do this by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water from 3 to 5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time.

4. Install a Point of Use home treatment device.

Tap filter: These home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of them require periodic regular maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove trace amounts of lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the tap. You should investigate all lead reduction claims for such devices. One way to do this is to look for the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) mark on the package or product.

NSF tests and verifies products, such as drinking water treatment units, to determine whether

they comply with specific standards, including the claims made by the manufacturer. Those products that pass the NSF's standards can bear the NSF mark. If you want more information about drinking water treatment devices, you can contact NSF at (800-NSF-8010) or visit their web site at www.nsf.com.

Countertop filter: Filtering systems are now widely available at most home-goods or department stores. Again, filters that pass NSF's testing criteria will carry the NSF mark. It is important to follow the product usage and filter replacement instructions. Leaving a filter in for longer than its recommended life can actually cause levels of lead or other contaminants to increase because of accumulation in the filter. In addition, there is a potential for bacterial contamination.

5. Replace internal plumbing (lead based soldered pipes, brass chrome plated faucets) that may contain lead.